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■ NEW YEAR'S FESTIVITIES: Carnival draws hundreds of children

Big fun for the little ones

KAESHA FORAND
 InPort News Staff

PORT COLBORNE — Ringing in the new year isn't only about partying and giving a traditional midnight kiss.

It's also about children having fun and spending time with mom and dad. Thanks to the fifth annual Casco Kidz Carnival, hundreds of children

had the opportunity to ring in the "new year" at 6 p.m. after an afternoon filled with activities.

The carnival ran from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. with free skating, face painting, crafts, cookie decorating and a mad science show.

Skating was a hit with Sam Elsie, his children Brooke and Dylan, and friend Melissa Gallant.

"The kids were excited all morning," Sam said. "It's a great idea, more family stuff to do instead of going out."

Eric Chutorash, Casco plant manager said last year's carnival drew about 1,000 people and he was happy to see hundreds of people at the Westside Arena on Dec. 31.

"It gives a way for us to give back to the community. It gives families things to do."

He said with fireworks being shot off at 6 p.m. at the arena, it was convenient for families to take part in the activities, a New Year's countdown and watch fireworks.

Henry and Amanda Arseneault watched as their son Logan decorated a crown in the craft room.

Amanda said it was the family's first time attending the carnival and she enjoyed having it so close to home.

"It's something to do with the kids. We can't get out tonight so we may as well do something with them," Henry said.

See CASCO KIDZ CARNIVAL Page 2



KAESHA FORAND Staff Photo

Melissa Gallant watches as Dylan Elsie skates at the Casco Kidz Carnival at the Westside Arena last Thursday.

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upfront

■ CASCO KIDZ CARNIVAL

New year's event draws hundreds of local kids

FROM PAGE 1

While some children started their afternoon skating, Shiloh Slater and her brother and sister were ready for a sugar fix. They decorated mile-high cookies with icing, candy and sprinkles.

"It's really fun because I like making cookies," she said. "We're gonna go skating and that's really fun."

Anna Oakes, Casco support services manager, was pleased with the turnout. She said the company wanted to make the carnival a family function and said the fireworks provide a great show.

She estimated the overall turnout at 1,500 people. Later on at night, West St. was a hub of activity at local bars and restaurants and the night was capped off with a fireworks show by RedBoys Pyrotechnicians Inc.



KAESHA FORAND Staff Photos

Clockwise from left: The mad science show garnered the attention of more than 100 children and their parents; Barb Butters paints a butterfly on Avery Kane; Logan Arsenault makes a crown in the craft room at the Casco Kidz Carnival; and Coco Chamberland helps Thomas, left, Jacklyn and Shiloh Slater decorate mile-high cookies topped with icing and treats.

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End of season for local waterway



WAYNE CAMPBELL
Staff Photos

Far left: The tug Lac Manitoba passes the laker Algowood, which is tied up for the winter season north of the Humberstone bridge at Main St. in Port Colborne. The canal officially closed for the season on Wednesday, Dec. 30.

Left: The south-bound tug Lac Manitoba slipped under the Humberstone bridge at Main St. in Port Colborne last Tuesday as the Welland Canal approached the end of the shipping season.



Above left: The laker Algowood is tied up for the season along the east canal wall north of the Humberstone Bridge. Although the canal closed for the shipping season, the maintenance season has just begun for shipping companies and Port Colborne businesses that provide repair crews, equipment and other services to the fleet of lakers that winter in Port Colborne.

Above middle: Ice moving in from Lake Erie meets open water beside the Canadian Enterprise docked in Port Colborne between the Clarence St. and Humberstone bridges. Lakers like the Canadian Enterprise wintering in Port Colborne will undergo maintenance, refits and upgrades. Above right: The tug Lac Manitoba that passed by Port Robinson last Tuesday.

KAESHA FORAND
InPort News Staff

PORT COLBORNE — The Welland Canal closed to all traffic Dec. 30, capping a season that saw fewer vessels transit the waterway.

As of Nov. 30, transits had dropped to 2,497 in 2009 from 3,244 for the same period in 2008, St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corp. reported. Total cargo weight dropped to 23,313 tonnes, down from 30,931 tonnes moved last year. Fewer tonnes of iron ore, coal, bulk products and general cargo were shipped through the canal, while 6,672 tonnes of grain moved this year, up from 6,103 tonnes in 2008.

The canal "closed" on Dec. 26, but certain vessels were permitted to transit through the Welland Canal until 11:59 p.m. last Wednesday. A 2010 opening date has not been set.

West Pier Marine and Industrial Supply Inc. provides ships such things as toilet paper, engine parts and other needed goods except for food and fuel. Vice-president Rick

Huneault said the marine side of his business is down this winter because fewer vessels travelled the canal.

"We're not so much dependent on tonnage — ships usually consume the same amount of material," he said.

West Pier's land-based Shell lubricant business helped offset the loss on the marine side of the business.

"Overall business has done reasonably well despite the drop," Huneault said. The Port Colborne business is looking forward to an economic rebound in 2010, he said, believing "the worst is over."

Despite the drop in ships and cargo, Dave Marsland, general manager of Allied Marine & Industrial, said 2009 was a good year for his West St. business.

"It's been a very, very funny year. The best year on record."

Allied's full-time crew of 48 kept busy on the Canadian Transfer, the Canadian Provider and the Marine Link Explorer. In January, February and March work employed up to 156 people.

Marsland expected six boats to dock along the canal this winter and believes his staff will work on at least four of them — completing engine overhauls, installing new sewage systems, performing general repairs and maintenance, and welding. As for next year, Marsland said it's hard to predict how much work will come Allied's way.

"Out of 36 ships that usually sail, we're down to 25 vessels. We do know there won't be as much work."

Meanwhile, the marine food supply business has also been down, said Vance Badawey of George Badawey Marine Food Supply. To compensate for low sales, the family business diversified to provide food to other distributors. "As for 2010 it's hard to say now. It depends on cargo ships we deal with," Badawey said.

Still, the family is no stranger to fluctuating economies. "We've been in business since 1922. We've had ups and downs through the years. This year in particular was challenging."

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Ken Koyama, publisher, general manager

SUN MEDIA
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ourview

Looking to the year ahead

Welcome to 2010.

A new year, a new decade and possibly a time to drop old habits, establish new good habits, and try and transform our lives is underway.

New Year's Eve was celebrated with two big bangs in Port Colborne.

The first was at the Casco Kids Carnival where hundreds of children and their families took part in skating, cookie decorating and crafts, and where they enjoyed a 6 p.m. fireworks show.

It's a great idea to have an early event to ensure children of all ages can take part. Families were skating, having a few laughs and enjoyed a free afternoon sponsored by Casco.

Hats off to them for providing financial support and organizing this event with the city. It was probably the best place to be in Port until 6 p.m.

Later on that night, West St. turned into a party hub and a second set of fireworks were set off over the Welland Canal.

These fireworks ushered in a new decade — one that will be filled with change for Port Colborne and Wainfleet.

In Wainfleet, the next year will see numerous changes to the quiet, agricultural community. It could see a multi-million dollar pipeline installed to alleviate the township's water woes.

A large number of residents are against this project and in the future, a water and sewer pipeline could allow for more development.

In Port Colborne, city staff will see the construction of a Health and Wellness Centre worth more than \$30 million to replace its aging facilities.

The project is long overdue and those who have their doubts should check out the public information sessions, look at the money that is available and make sure they have all the information before they make a judgment call.

A special council meeting will be held this month to discuss the city's options to help get the planning process underway, followed by construction.

The hospital fight will continue and rest assured that Port Colborne residents and council won't stop fighting any time soon. We need to help preserve our services and protect our hospital.

And who could forget that this is an election year. In October we will see a new council and mayor elected in Port Colborne and Wainfleet. Current council members will ponder their next political career moves and members of the public will also ponder if they want to step into the political fighting ring.

We believe 2010 should be an interesting year that may see the beginning of change for our two lakeside communities.

WINNERS SCORE LEAFS TICKETS



KAESHA FORAND Staff Photo
Bernie and Irene Sumbler were the winners of the downtown shopping draw for two Toronto Maple Leafs tickets and \$200 in shopping money. The prize was provided by Gary Talosi of Dundee Wealth Management (left) to Bernie and Irene with Brendt Salis and Gayna Evans, community development co-ordinators with South Niagara Community Futures Development Corp.

readers' views

Santa's Helpers thanks community for donations and volunteering

Thank you to the Port Colborne/Wainfleet community for supporting the Santa's Helpers Christmas Food and Toy Program.

The donations of toys, food, cash, knitted items and other items were incredible.

Your generosity is greatly appreciated.

Special thanks to all volunteers who worked so hard to make this event successful.

Your thoughtfulness and caring means a lot to us and makes our work so much more enjoyable. You demonstrated in a special way, the true meaning of Christmas.

Santa's Helpers assisted 380 less fortunate households in our community. Food was distributed for a total of 1,060 persons and 480 children up to

the age of 16 received toys, gifts, gift certificates, stocking stuffers, knitted items (such as mitts, hats and scarves) and much more.

Each household received a generous food hamper, a ham and food voucher for meat, dairy products, fruit and produce.

Santa's Helpers was established 1967, and is an entirely volunteer group with a single objective: to assemble and distribute food boxes, new toys and gifts to those families registered through the central registry.

The Santa's Helpers Committee wishes everyone a happy and prosperous 2010.

Mieke Van Es, Coordinator
Santa's Helpers

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WORLD ISSUES

Not enough latex gloves?



Gwynne Dyer

It is the duty of all public officials to "do something" whenever a new threat appears, even if there is nothing sensible to be done.

If they don't make a show of solving the problem, the media will punish them severely. So we have had a vigorous U.S. government response to the present apprehension of the Underpants Bomber.

Umar Farouk Abdulmuttallab was from Nigeria and he was Muslim.

Therefore, the U.S. government has announced that all travellers to the United States from Nigeria, Pakistan, Syria, Iran, Sudan, Yemen and seven other Muslim or partly Muslim countries will face extra checks at airport security. They will be patted down by hand and their carry-on bags will be searched by hand.

So that's all fixed, then. No more exploding underpants.

Except that Abdulmuttallab's underpants were on his body, so hand searches of cabin baggage aren't going to help much. Moreover, it is far from certain that a physical pat-down of Abdulmuttallab would have detected the guilty underpants.

Then there are the curious additions and omissions in the list of countries affected. Cuba is included, presumably in order to have at least one non-Muslim country on the list, although there has never been any Cuban support for anti-U.S. terrorism. (Rather the other way around, in fact, though that was long ago now.)

More striking is the absence of Britain, France and the Netherlands from the list of countries whose travellers must get the full treatment. Britain was the home of Richard Reid, the unsuccessful shoe bomber, who actually departed for the U.S. from Paris.

The group who were caught preparing to smuggle explosive liquids aboard U.S.-bound flights in aerosol containers were British. Abdulmuttallab actually passed through Schiphol airport security in the Netherlands on his way to Detroit. Why are these countries exempt?

Probably because the number of visitors from those countries is too large. The number could be cut down drastically if profiling were permissible, since not very many non-Muslim suicide bombers attack the United States.

■ GWYNNE DYER

Common sense trumps 'security'

FROM PAGE 4

However, even profiling entire countries for special searches through an anguished protest from Nawar Shaw of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee: "This is extreme and very dangerous. All of a sudden people are being related to terrorism just because of the nation they are from."

And profiling individuals is an absolute no-go area: all the Christian Nigerians (half of the population) must be parted down two. For every young Muslim male who is selected for a more intensive search, one non-Muslim grandmother must be pulled aside as well.

This is starting to sound like a rant, but I'm actually demanding more stringent security measures. I am arguing in favour of less security at the airport, and a lot more emphasis on real security work before the would-be bombers check in.

With the sole exceptions of Richard Reid and Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, all the plots to blow up airlines bound for the United States since 9/11 have been thwarted by the intelligence services, not by the hundreds of thousands of poorly paid security personnel who staff the gates at the airports.

And they didn't catch either Reid or Abdulmutallab. What conclusions should we draw from that?

We should conclude that further "enhancements" to airport security are a total waste of time and money, although basic security that stops people from smuggling guns and knives aboard aircraft should be maintained.

Don't reward the politicians for submitting to the idiotic measures that the media demand of them.

Accept that nothing is perfect, and remember that you are still 50 times more likely to die in a car crash than in an aircraft crash, whether caused by human error, technical failure or underpants bomb.

The alternative is to try to close every loophole—and the obvious hole in airport security today is the fact that they do not check for anal bombs.

The first suicide bomber with an explosive device in his rectum has already struck, although not on an aircraft. Four months ago, an al-Qaeda-linked militant passed through all the security checks and blew himself up during an audience with Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, Saudi Arabia's deputy interior minister. His bomb was presumably detonated by remote control, but an airline passenger could simply go to the toilet and trigger it himself.

If Abdulmutallab had boarded the Detroit-bound aircraft with the explosive device inside his body rather than sewn into his underpants, how were the security staff going to find it? Only by the time-tested method that prison guards regularly use: the body cavity search.

This could obviously be done at airports too. You'd have to hire five or six times as many guards and expand the security area considerably to give

Accept that nothing is perfect, and remember that you are still 50 times more likely to die in a car crash than

in an aircraft crash, whether caused by human error, technical failure or underpants bomb.

those being searched some privacy, but if we were really determined to eliminate every threat to air travel, every suspicious body cavity could be searched.

Yet nobody has proposed putting this policy into effect, and that is not because they are worried about a shortage of latex gloves.

The whole airport security mania is largely symbolic, and body cavity searches would upset far more people than they would reassure—so in this case, common sense trumps "security."

It should do so in many other cases too.

Gwynne Dyer's latest book, *Climate Wars*, was published recently in Canada by Random House and Vintage.

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Keep the Christmas spirit alive through the year

REV. THOMAS P. ARTH
First Evangelical Lutheran Church

I've been thinking about getting back into the swing of things.

The holidays are over which leaves me in a somewhat melancholy mood. Even though I might sometimes decry the commercialism of the season, something about the decorations in the stores — even when they go up right after Halloween — get me into the spirit of Christmas.

The season brought with it the obligation to get together with grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, and all of the rest of the relations, but I looked forward to that.

For me, a pastor, the season brought with it some extra work and extra worship services and extra sermons to preach, but I enjoyed that.

And then there were the presents. I enjoyed going out or going online to shop, to try to think of something that my wife or my kids would like to find under the tree. And even though I'm 43 years old, I still enjoy getting presents the way I did when I was seven.

As much as we, in the church, like to emphasize that the Christmas season doesn't end on Dec. 25, it still feels that way. We left the tree and the decorations and the poinsettias to decorate the church, we even sang Christmas carols on the two Sundays after Christmas, because the 12 days of Christmas begin on Christmas Day and run into January.

But for some reason it didn't feel like Christmas anymore. The TV channels stopped playing Christmas specials

and movies. The radio stopped playing Christmas music. And somehow I wasn't able to maintain that Christmas spirit in my own heart and mind.

Then the kids went back to school this week. I had to start setting my alarm again in the mornings and getting up earlier than I ever did during the past two weeks. It's back to the old routine. It's kind of a drag.

But then I remembered a song that I haven't heard in many years. As a kid I had a *Sesame Street* Christmas record. It's certainly not a religious song but I think it can have religious significance. It's called *Keep Christmas with You All Through the Year*. The message of Christmas is that God became one of us and came to be with us. And that song is significant because that Christmas miracle is not something that happens on one night of the year, 12 days of the year, or even for one month a year. It's not a message that only rings true as long as there's a fir tree standing in your living room or as long as carols play on the radio.

We believe that Christ comes among us whenever his followers gather to worship. We believe that Christ comes among us whenever we hear his word proclaimed. We believe that Christ comes among us whenever we share in his holy meal. We believe that Christ comes among us whenever we show love to our neighbours.

So I'll look forward to hearing those carols again next December. And I'll try to remember that the miracle of Christmas — of God coming to be with us and among us — happens all year long.

But I don't have to enjoy getting up with the alarm again.

■ DONATION



The Spirit of Christmas fundraiser — organized by the Rotary Club of Port Colborne Centennial and the Port Colborne/Wainfleet Chamber of Commerce — raised \$2,600 for Santa's Helpers and Port Cares. Terry Kaddwell, Rotary president, presents the cheque to Mieke Van Es of Santa's Helpers and Lynda Reinhart of Port Cares with Chamber president Donna Martens-Gammon.

KAESHA FORAND Staff Photo

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■ **SCHOOL LIFE:** Port High students collect items for food bank

Learning to make a difference

PAIGE THOMPSON
for InPort News

Every year the Christmas holidays roll around and every year there are people who cannot celebrate.

Students from Port Colborne High School are helping to make a difference. Last December, they helped the Inter-Church Food Bank through a variety of events.

At a dance recital, they collected donations of canned goods at the entrance. Teacher Tanya Carl has also been collecting money from all of her classes to help.

The school's sociology and career classes have collected about \$90 and purchased goods for Inter-Church food bank. They made their donation to the food bank on Dec. 18.

Every year, Carl collects loose change and donates it to a local family in need.

"We are responsible, as citizens, to give back to the community and I like to encourage students to do the same," Carl said.

Carl said she feels a sense of satisfaction helping others because she knows that it is making others happy.

A few students from each of the classes went out and bought food, while others brought some from home.

Paige Hissler and Celia Carr helped with purchasing goods and toys with the money raised.

Hissler said that it makes her feel good to know that she is helping others in need.

"We should help out people in the community and allow those in need to have a good Christmas," she said.

Carl offered her assistance because, "we don't need it all for ourselves." She added that she gets a wonderful feeling knowing that people will have a better Christmas.

The two girls both felt that this should not only be an event happening during the holidays, but year round. For an example of this, they don't need to look further than Carl, who contributes to those in need throughout the year.

Since last spring, Carl has been encouraging her classes to donate their loose change to help people in Darfur.

They have already begun to make a difference. With the money collected, her classes have sent solar panel cookers to the women of Darfur.

Paige Thompson is a student at Port Colborne High School.

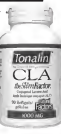


PAIGE THOMPSON for InPort News

Port Colborne High School's sociology and career classes collected loose change and were proud to donate it to the Inter-Church Food Bank on Dec. 18.

Yes! You Can Lose Weight

There has been a lot of media chatter lately, casting doubt on the effectiveness of diet supplements. The truth of the matter is, no supplement on its own can offer you the magic of instant weight loss but... if you are committed to making changes in your diet, lifestyle and getting more active, great things can happen!



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■ SPECIAL EVENT: Annual festival kicks off Feb. 4

Gearing up for Sportsfest

KAESHA FORAND
InPort News Staff

PORT COLBORNE — The cold, dreary winter months will soon receive a dose of life when Sportsfest draws residents outside for some physical activity and social events.

The 11th annual Sportsfest is being held Feb. 4, 5, 6 and 7 throughout Port Colborne to bring residents out of hibernation and help worthy community organizations with proceeds from each event benefiting local charities, organizations and clubs.

Port Colborne special events manager Allaina Kane said Sportsfest events typically have good turnouts and events such as Whisky Run's snow golf has a local following of players who come year after year.

"It's an opportunity for the community to be active and support organizations in the community."

This year's celebrity guest speaker is Dennis Hull who will appear at the Roselawn Centre on Saturday Feb. 6. Hull was born in Belleville and played left wing with the Chicago Black Hawks with his brother Bobby Hull.

Doors open at 7 p.m. and the auction closes at 9:30 p.m. Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$12.50 for youths under 16 for the evening where an auction session will be held, hockey cards and penny table tickets can be purchased and from 8 to 8:30 master of ceremonies Mark Hebscher will host a hot stove in the theatre.

For information and tickets call the Roselawn box office at 905-834-0833.

Thursday Feb. 4

• The Canalside Pub and Eatery is holding

a four-course dinner with wine to accompany each course for \$50. For more information contact Greg at 905-834-6090.

Friday Feb. 5

• The Niagara Falls Pee wee B Girls travel hockey presents a hockey trivia night at the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 56, upstairs, at 67 Clarence St. Doors open at 6 p.m., trivia begins at 7 p.m. for \$40 for a team of four. Come and challenge others while showing off your knowledge of hockey. Great trivia, prizes, snacks and a cash bar. For more information call Gina at 905-834-1668 ext. 236.

• The Canalside Pub and Eatery presents a music trivia night at the restaurant at 232 West st. at 8 p.m. Get your group of two to five people together for \$10 per person. For more information contact Greg at 905-834-6090.

Saturday Feb. 6

• The Port Colborne Pirates face off against the St. Catharines Falcons at Westside Arena at 7:30 p.m.

• The Canalside Pub and Eatery is holding a celebrity bartender evening from 2 to 6 p.m. where participants can get autographs from professional hockey and football players for \$10 per person.

• Free public swimming at Centennial Pool at 124 Janet St. from 1 to 2:30 p.m.

• The Royal Canadian Legion Branch 56 is holding a dart tournament with registration at 12:30 for mixed teams of two men and two women for \$25 per team. For more information call 905-834-9512.

• Whisky Run presents its 11th annual Snow Golf Tournament at 2:30 p.m. For \$20 per person, bring out your own tennis ball and have some winter fun on the course. For

more information call Lou at 905-835-9864.

• Club Frontenac presents a Texas Hold'em tournament at the Lions Club Hall, 40 Chip-pawa Rd. Registration is at 6:30 p.m. and the first deal will be held at 7 p.m. for \$25 per person. For more information call Yves at 905-834-6884.

Sunday Feb. 7

• Shorhills Cycling club is holding The Frostdale Mountain Bike Race in the Robinson-wood Lands from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

• The Port Colborne and District Concession Club presents a treat and shoot about at their clubhouse at 3757 Denison Concession from 1 to 5 p.m. Contact Chris at 905-834-1617.

• The Canalside Pub and Eatery is holding a soup cook off from 1 to 4 p.m. Enter your favourite soup or come out and try a variety of soups.

• New to this year's event is an all weather mountain bike race. An early bird can register before Jan. 15 for \$25 or \$30 until Feb. 6 at noon. The event will be an individual time trial event based on the best lap time of two laps of the 10 kilometre or 20 kilometre course. The course goes through the Robinson-wood lands. For more information visit thefrostdale.com.

• A free skate will be held at the Westside Arena from 3 to 4:20 p.m.

The majority of events require pre-registration and it's advised to call the organizers for additional details. The Sportsfest brochure is also available on the city's website.

kforand@wellandtribune.ca

early years

The following events will be held at Ontario Early Years Centre, Port Colborne in January 2010.

• The Ontario Early Years Centre offers interactive play sessions, mornings: Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to noon and afternoons: Monday to Friday from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. and Thursday 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. These programs are for children, newborn to six years and their parent/caregiver. Visit the Ontario Early Years Centre, 50 Charlotte St. or call 905-334-9071 for more information.

• Infant Massage — Interactive Infant Program on Monday, Jan. 11, 18, 25 and Feb. 1 from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Pre-registration is required. This afternoon program is for infants and their parent/caregiver.

• Cooking with Kids, Play and Learn — Interactive preschool program on Wednesday, Jan. 13 from 9:30 to 10:45 a.m. Pre-registration is required. This morning session is for toddlers 18 months to 30 months and their parent/caregiver.

• Cooking with Kids, Play and Learn — Interactive preschool program on Thursday, Jan. 14 from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Pre-registration is required. This morning session is for preschoolers age two to six and their parent/caregiver.

• Saddle and the Snowman, Play and Learn — Interactive toddler program on Wednesday, Jan. 20 from 9:30 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. Pre-registration is required. This morning session is for toddlers 18 months to 30 months and their parent/caregiver.

• Stella Queen of the Snow, Play and Learn — Interactive preschool program on Thursday, Jan. 21 from 9:30 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. Pre-registration is required. This morning session is for preschoolers two to six years old and their parent/caregiver.

• Family Literacy Day Celebration — Interactive program on Wednesday, Jan. 27 from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Pre-registration is required. This morning session is for children newborn to six years of age and their parent/caregiver.

• Teddy Bear Clinic, Play & Learn — Interactive preschool program on Thursday, Jan. 28 and Feb. 4 from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Pre-registration is required. These morning sessions are for preschoolers aged two to six years old and their parent/caregiver.

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■ **DEVELOPMENT:** Condo plans get a rise out of local residents

Lakewood Camp OMB hearing to resume

KAESHA FORAND
InPort News Staff

WAINFLEET — The Lakewood Beach Properties Ontario Municipal Board hearing is set to resume after an adjournment of longer than 14 months.

The hearing continues on Wednesday, Jan. 13, at 11 a.m. in Wainfleet township council chambers.

This time around, Betty Konc of the Wainfleet Ratepayers Association is also an appellant to Lakewood Beach Properties' request to build 35 11-metre-tall condominium units at the former Easter Seals Camp.

In October 2009, the board gave an interim decision directing Lakewood Beach Properties to complete more studies and bring the results back to the board when they were complete.

Lee and Jeff Bott launched the hearing based on their concerns for the protection of reforested area on the site; flood control on the subject lands, their property and neighbouring properties; shoreline protection; the Fowler's toad habitat; the project's consistency with the Provincial Planning Statement; its conformity with the Niagara Region Official Plan and the Wainfleet Official Plan; the protection of views and that the height of the new homes would exceed permitted heights of surrounding nine-metre-tall homes.

Lee Bott said she is also concerned with the existing tile bed on the property. She said the septic tank and tile bed from the former camp still contains medication children took while at camp and believes if that if disturbed, it could negatively affect the surrounding area.

"My stance hasn't changed. Not for so many reasons for development of any kind," she said recently from her home which abuts the camp property.

She said the site isn't practical for condominiums because damage could be caused during severe storms. She said the subdivision breaks a number of township policies that were amended by aldermen to allow the project to move forward.

"They've broken every rule in the book and doesn't that mean it's not right for this area?"

She said she hopes Konc's addition to the list of appellants demonstrates it is not only the Bott family against the development.

The Botts have lived in their Lakeshore Rd. home for more than 25 years and have chosen to defend themselves at the hearings, devoting much time to their fight against the development they believe puts the entire area at risk.

For example, the developers were asked to perform a number of studies during the past year to bring back to the board.

Last summer, a water quantity test was performed which resulted in the Bott well dropping 42 metres during the first 24 hours. Bott said she well alarm rang all night and the family didn't sleep for three

They've broken every rule in the book and doesn't that mean it's not right for the area?

Lee Bott, concerned resident

days, fearing their water level would continue to drop dangerously low.

"Nobody would do anything about it. I feel so misrepresented by my town council — so disgusted by the way we're ignored."

Konc's objections on behalf of ratepayers involve an approved communal septic system to service the homes. She spoke at a previous hearing and applied to be an appellant to the board so she could speak to Bott's concerns and vice versa.

The developers have stated that if a water and sewer pipeline was to be built in the future, the communal system would be eliminated at their cost.

"I have no idea why the region would support this," Konc said.

"Our main objection is the township official plan stating no new development can be built using communal systems."

Konc's ratepayer board has been hard at work gathering information, including 31 reasons why the project should be moved forward due to broken policies and procedures.

"Lakewood is now part of the water and sewer fight. (The region and township) told 1,365 residents 'No, you can't do this,' but they tell developers 'Yes, you can do this.'"

If Phase 1 is completed, Phase 2 would see another 21 condominiums built.

Bott hopes that Wainfleet residents will attend the Jan. 13 hearing to oppose the project. The hearing is scheduled to continue Jan. 14, and if needed Jan. 15.

Wainfleet activities

The following events are taking place at the Wainfleet Public Library. For more information call 905-899-1277.

• Ongoing — Computer workshops and one-on-one training are available Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Call 905-899-1277 to book an appointment.

• Monday, Jan. 11 — Family Wii Night from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. All ages are welcome to play the library's new Nintendo Wii games. Try out Mario Kart, Guitar Hero World Tour, Wii Fit and Active Life: Outdoor Challenge.

• Thursday, Jan. 14 — Philosopher's Café at 6:30 p.m. Drop by for refreshments and a

lively discussion. This month's topic is Let's Talk. No philosophy training required, real life experience desired.

Wednesday, Jan. 20 — Sit, Stay, Read from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. Children can practice their reading skills by bringing a book to read to a St. John Ambulance therapy dog. Call to register for a 10-minute reading session by Jan. 18.

Thursday, Jan. 21 — Ancestry library edition workshop from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. This hands-on workshop will show you how to use the library's new genealogy database. It has census, church, court, immigration and record collections covering Canada, United States, United Kingdom, Europe and Australia. Call to pre-register your attendance by Tuesday, Jan. 19 as space is limited.

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IMPORT/NEWS

Reader's Choice

2009

Cast Your Vote!

Pick the Best In Port Colborne

All readers who submit a Readers' Choice ballot will have their names entered into a draw and the lucky winner of this draw will receive \$100.00 cash.

Fill in your ballot for the In Port's Readers Choice Awards. Write the names of your favourite businesses on the line provided. You can vote for as many different types of business as you wish in each of the 5 categories. Those merchants and businesses who receive the most votes will win the prestigious Readers Choice Award. The winners will be announced in a special section of the In Port News February 26th, 2010. Watch for our prizes! Your ballot is your entry to our cash prize! So fill it out and send it today! The deadline for submission is 5 p.m., Friday, January 23rd, 2010.

Please note: All categories do not have to be fully completed.

* Non Subscribers win \$50

BEST PLACE FOR FOOD AND DRINK

Chinese Restaurant _____
Italian Restaurant _____
Fish & Chips _____
Fast Food Restaurant _____
Family Restaurant _____
Best Overall Restaurant _____
Restaurant with a View _____
Breakfast _____
Lunch _____
Outdoor Patio _____
Chicken Wings _____
Hamburger _____
Pizza _____
Sub _____

BEST ENTERTAINMENT

Movie Rental _____
Bar _____
Golf Course _____

BEST PEOPLE (INCLUDES FULL NAME AND NAME OF BUSINESS)

Automobile Sales Person _____
Insurance Agent _____
Financial Planner _____
Real Estate Salesperson _____
Photographer _____
Hairstylist _____

BEST SHOPPING

Men's Store _____
Women's Store _____
Shoe Store _____
Optical Store _____

BEST SHOPPING CONTINUED ...

Gracery Store _____
Health Food Store _____
Frozen Food Store _____
Bakery _____
Convenience Store _____
Discount Store _____
Pharmacy _____
Pet Food Store/Supply _____
Sporting Goods _____
Florist _____
Office Supplies _____
Gift Shop _____
Furniture Store _____
Bedding _____
Appliances _____
Home Electronics _____
Home Cleaning Service _____
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Catering Company _____
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Contest Rules:

Only original newspaper ballots or hand-drawn ballots are accepted. No mechanical reproductions allowed. Employees of the Tribune, and their immediate families are not eligible. Winners of the Grand Prize will be determined by a random draw from all entries received by 5 p.m., Friday, January 23rd, 2009. Winners will be contacted by phone. You do not have to fully complete ballot to win.

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■ **BOXING DAY CRASH:** Teen's death en route to hospital adds to ER closure concerns

Niagara MPP seeks fatality inquiry

RAY SPITERI
QMI AGENCY

Niagara Falls MPP Kim Craltor wants a public inquiry to determine if the closing of emergency rooms in Fort Erie and Port Colborne played a role in the death of a Fort Erie teen who was involved in a car crash on Boxing Day.

Craltor has written Ontario's chief coroner Dr. Andrew McCallum asking that he investigate the death of 18-year-old Rellly Anzovino. He said he feels that without an examination of all the facts, the community's concerns will grow and undermine the confidence in the delivery of health care to Fort Erie residents.

"It is important to get all the facts from an impartial source, so we can address any deficiencies," Craltor said. Anzovino, a graduate of Lakeshore Catholic High School, was a passenger in a car in a collision near the Hwy. 3 and Nigh Rd. She died en route to Welland County General Hospital.

Craltor said there is concern that Anzovino's death was a result of the conversion of ERs to urgent care centres at Douglas Memorial Hospital in September and Port Colborne hospital in July. He said the Port Colborne facility is about 10 minutes away from the collision, the Fort Erie location 13 minutes and the Welland site 22 minutes.

"It is being argued somewhat passionately that the nine- to 12-minute time difference would have made a difference in the life of this young woman," he said. "Since the emotions in this case are particularly strong, it is very important that the public clearly understand all the facts and circumstances in this case at this time."

He said he believes the chief coroner has the discretionary power to look into the circumstances surrounding the

"It is being argued ... that the nine- to 12-minute time difference would have made a difference in the life of this young woman."

Kim Craltor, Niagara Falls MPP

death.

"I didn't take this lightly. It's not a simple thing. I thought it over for the last couple of days."

A Niagara Health System official said the NHS will cooperate with any decision made by the Office of the Chief Coroner.

"We understand the need for public understanding of the facts and circumstances surrounding this incident to have confidence in the delivery of health care in Niagara," said NHS public affairs consultant Caroline Bourque-Wiley.

Craltor said after Anzovino's accident, he received e-mail from people concerned about changes to hospital services in Fort Erie.

"I had a number of people ... that saw the story and questioned, 'Would it have made a difference had she gone to Fort Erie? How do you know and how do you find out?'"

He said an inquiry would address public concerns.

Craltor has long been a critic of the organization of Niagara's hospitals. He opposed the closure of the ERs in Fort Erie and Port Colborne — a move supported by his own government. In December, he supported a call by Niagara Falls city council for the appointment of a provincial investigator to look into concerns raised by the Ontario Medical Association's emergency medicine section about the operation of the ER at Greater Niagara General Hospital.

■ **HOLIDAYS:** Port Cares hosts Christmas party



Supplied Photo

The Port Cares Reach Out Centre held a Christmas party lunch recently for clients. Volunteers for the event included from left Kaitiavik participant Dan Collins, Peggy O'Hara, Annette Zarb-Tedesco and Port Cares staff Marisa Cantisani.

■ **HOLIDAYS:** Special guest attends Cadet banquet



Supplied Photo

The 79 Lynton Davies Air Cadet Squadron held its annual Christmas Banquet at Branch 56 Royal Canadian Legion recently with invited dignitaries, cadets and family members. Guests had the great honour of the presence of retired flying officer Edward Lynton Davies (pictured back left), the squadron's namesake. Davies has had an impressive career and was accepted into the British Embassy in Ottawa for a short service commission and was in the Royal Air Force before the Second World War. Davies was later posted to fly specially equipped Ansons and later Whitties with the 612 Squadron of Coastal Command, but not until after much required training. Pilot officer Davies helped to form a New Hudson operational training unit in Lincolnshire where he was posted to 502 Squadron, flying Whitties out of Northern Ireland. In his later years, Davies worked with the National Research Council, Grenada Division Hawker Siddeley, Canadian Curtiss Wright, Donlee Nuclear, and again with Orenda.

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Wednesday, January 20, 2010
PRINCESS ELIZABETH PUBLIC SCHOOL
330 Schofield Ave. S., Welland
905-374-3460
Principal: Robb McLean

Thursday, January 21, 2010
PRINCE PHILIP PUBLIC SCHOOL
3112 Dorchester Rd., Niagara Falls
905-356-0521
Principal: Mario Zeoli

Applications for September 2010 classes are due January 29, 2010

For more information, call the Principal listed above or Lorraine Gower at 905-227-5551, ext. 52220.

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■ **FEATURE:** Ellen Smith has spent years tirelessly challenging Vale Inco

What does it all mean?

MARK TAYTI
InPort News Staff

PORT COLBORNE — Sitting in a Welland courtroom with her name attached to a high-stakes class action civil suit against nickel giant Vale Inco is not something Ellen Smith ever thought she might be doing.

Roll the clock back a decade or so and Smith lived a relatively normal life on the east side of Port Colborne. She had lived in her Rodney St. house for a couple of years and was raising a couple kids with her husband.

That was before news broke in the community about elevated nickel levels in the soil. Her own property was tested at 15,000 parts per million and 91 Rodney St. became one of 25 properties under Ministry of Environment orders against Vale Inco slated for remediation.

Then came the Community Based Risk Assessment (CBRA), an in-depth study that has been going on since near the time of the last decade.

Smith got interested once she found out there were elevated levels of what have come to be known as "chemicals of concern" in her neighbourhood.

"I didn't know what it all meant," she said.

Ten years later, Smith still worries about what it all means. Her two children were raised in the home red-flagged by the ministry.

Sitting in on literally hundreds of CBRA meetings has done little to ease Smith's concerns. She said the scientific community is at odds on what the long-term health effects might be.

"Is there going to be human health problems? Nobody knows. The whole idea of not knowing has kept me involved."

Smith said there is still a lot of interest in the class action lawsuit that got underway in Welland in the fall and is scheduled to reconvene on Jan. 11, 2010.

"People stop me on the street and ask me how it's going," she said.

"I am constantly getting phone calls from neighbours and people who have lived in the

"There was always that worry in the back of your head as to the long-term effects of elevated levels of nickel in the soil."

Ellen Smith

"Is there going to be human health problems? Nobody knows. The whole idea of not knowing has kept me involved."

Ellen Smith

neighbourhood. People are interested."

The class action case deals specifically with real estate values and what impact chemical contamination may have had on those values since the news broke.

What the class action suit does not take into account is the very real stress the whole situation has had on families in the Rodney St. neighbourhood.

When the class action was certified, it was initially Will Pearson who was named as plaintiff. A decision was made to remove his name and replace it with Smith's because of Pearson's ongoing health issues.

Regardless of the outcome, one thing Smith is never getting back is the time she invested tracking the process, attending meetings and researching on the internet in order to answer that nagging question.

"There was a lot to the quality of life with my family," she admits.

"There is always that worry in the back of your head as to the long-term effects of elevated levels of nickel in the soil."

She said a decision was made to separate the health issues from the real estate issues in the ongoing court case. She had hoped the CBRA would answer the questions concerning chemical exposure.

The more time that passes, the more she doubts it.

"I don't think the CBRA will accomplish anything — other than compile data," she said.

"I am never going to get that question answered."

Smith said Vale Inco has spent millions to do the study. She believes the money would have been better spent by sitting down with property owners and coming to some out-of-court settlement.

"The scientific community is at odds with itself," she said.

"A lot of the process has become political."

See ELLEN SMITH | Page 14



MARK TAYTI
Staff Photo
Rodney St. resident Ellen Smith is in the midst of a class action civil suit that is seeking damages against nickel giant Vale Inco on behalf of property owners in Port Colborne.

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■ YEAR IN REVIEW: Port Colborne

2009 was a busy year



Vance M. Badaway

MAYOR OF PORT COLBORNE

This past year was certainly a busy, productive year in preparing the City of Port Colborne toward future sustainability, ensuring future generations have the same opportunities that we had while growing up in our community.

Establishing four Community Improvement Plans — one of which will move forward in 2010 — preparing for the construction of a new health and wellness facility, continuing to complete deferred capital infrastructure work, and — most importantly — ensuring that the City of Port Colborne has in place, equal access to health care for all of our residents, has been at the forefront of our efforts and continues to position the City of Port Colborne as a progressive community heading into 2010.

With regard to health care, we continue to meet with the province to ensure they understand the implications of the decisions made by the Niagara Health System throughout the past two years. We also continue to meet with mayors and MPPs from across Ontario. We have brought forward constructive solutions, in turn, creating new rural/small community healthcare policies that benefit the City of Port Colborne, the Niagara Region, as well as all municipalities throughout the province that are beginning to experience similar attacks on their hospitals and overall health care system(s).

We continue to appeal to the premier and the Minister of Health and Long Term Care to look responsibly upon our community's response to the Hospital Improvement Plan. By incorporating the South Niagara Health Care Corporation, it has enabled our community to work in a cohesive manner to make new services available, such as those related to community based primary health care.

We have been successful at attracting four new physicians to Port Colborne this year; general practitioners, Dr. Jason King and Dr. Haihu Xu, as well as, Dr. Brenda Rempel

"We have established, ratified and are moving forward with a regional growth management strategy that identifies the southern tier of the region as the area targeted for future growth."

Vance Badaway, mayor

(endocrinologist) and Dr. Emilio Raimondo (cardiac specialist).

However, our challenge has become the integration of these services with acute care services that are no longer available within our community, such as a fully serviced emergency department. By not having these services it has created an imbalance of access by our residents to these particular health care services.

In terms of the city's aggressive capital projects program, we have worked extremely hard throughout the past year to successfully bring before city council both information and financing for all our capital projects to allow members of council to make well informed decisions. All decisions will be based on construction and financial options.

In 2009 we were successful at bringing upper levels of government together to fund over \$40 million to accelerate capital projects within the City of Port Colborne. The city has now prepared itself for a new Health and Wellness Multi-Use Centre, improvements to the Lannan Sports Complex, the Main Street Gateway Community Improvement Plan, the Downtown Community Improvement Plan, the Brownfields Strategy/Community Improvement Plan and the Waterfront Revitalization Strategy Secondary Plan/Community Improvement Plan.

The city has as well, continued to complete deferred capital infrastructure work such as the upgrading of the Sewage/Water Treatment Plant, water/wastewater trunk and distribution lines and storm sewer projects, roads, sidewalks, parks, ditch cleaning, drainage improvements and the completion of an Industrial Lands Study, identifying future industrial growth areas.

The city and region are working closer

together by ensuring future sustainability for the south.

We are moving forward with the East/West Arterial Trade Corridor, the first link of the Niagara/GTA (Mid Peninsular) Corridor, set to break ground in 2012. The expansion of Hwy. 406 to the south has begun and we are working with the region to ensure that the servicing of the Hwy. 140/406 corridor with water/wastewater capacities is contained within the one to five year capital plan and we are working with the province to ensure Hwy. 140 is resurfaced in 2010 to 2011.

We have established, ratified and are moving forward with a regional growth management strategy that identifies the southern tier of the region as the area targeted for future growth.

With that, we have also established, ratified and are moving forward with the Regional Economic Gateway Zone and Centre Vision, once again, located in the southern tier of the region. This positions the city as a multi-modal transportation network and a future free trade zone. In partnership with the region we have budgeted and are moving forward to formalize a Niagara-wide transit system that includes Niagara Specialized Transit, inter-municipal transit and GO Bus and Rail.

The city is continuing to work with the region to brand/market Port Colborne and the Region of Niagara to the world through strategies including events marketing, regional branding and stakeholder partnerships.

In 2009, the city reactivated the Community Activities Network, activated the incorporation of Safe Communities Port Colborne, in turn, concentrating on youth, seniors and business programming.

We are also working to ensure there is a consistent, strong connection with our high schools, colleges, universities and our local and regional business community to train, recruit and utilize their experience. It is essential that we have a skilled workforce in Port Colborne and Niagara to attract and expand our business and industry.

Looking forward to 2010, by working together, it will truly be a year where the city will continue to break new ground.

■ ELLEN SMITH

Resident spends a decade battling Port's Goliath

FROM PAGE 13

She said the class action suit represents anyone with property within the city's borders, who has owned the property as of September 2000.

For her part, she has spent several days in Toronto in the discovery process and has spent about four days on the stand during the trial giving evidence and being cross examined.

"Talk about stress," she said when asked about the trial.

"Physically and mentally, it takes a lot out of you."

She said the CBRA and the lawsuit have dragged on for so long that many people have forgotten about it or they think it's over. Attendance at CBRA community meetings and open houses held to vet reports has dropped off and only a handful of Rodney St. neighbours remain actively engaged.

There have been times during the court case when Smith has been on of a sparse feed in the gallery to witness the two legal teams argue the fate of the community.

Whatever the outcome, it affects virtually every (property owner) in Port Colborne," Smith said.

"I think there are just over 6,000 households. There is a lot of weight on my shoulders but I am not alone. I have a fantastic team of lawyers."


She is hoping a decision on the case will be handed down by the summer of 2010.

Despite all that Smith has encountered along the way, she has no regrets, other than the time lost with family.

Smith also plans on seeing things through to their conclusion.

"It's been 10 years of learning," she said.

"I never had a interest in anything like this until it happened to me."



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■ YEAR IN REVIEW: Wainfleet

Looking ahead to 2011



Barb Henderson
MAYOR OF THE TOWNSHIP OF
WAINFLEET

The end of the year is a perfect time to reflect on the events that have transpired over the previous 12 months. We often discover that what occurred in the past has, in fact, laid the foundation or the building blocks for what we hope to accomplish in the future.

As mayor, I could easily recite from a 2009 list that highlights the advancements in the Official Plan update, infrastructure improvements, or our many successful community events, but those projects have already been well covered by the local media and through our own township newsletter. Instead, as part of the year in review process, I am going to focus on how our small rural township responds to the ongoing challenges that it faces each year.

As one of 12 municipalities that make up the Niagara Region, our municipality is unique in that it is second largest in land area while being the smallest in population. However, just like our larger neighbouring municipalities, Wainfleet is mandated to provide specific core services to its residents and must meet the same legislated standards.

For that reason, our township is faced with both challenges and opportunities. The challenges are the result of a small tax base and an extensive network of roads; opportunities occur when council and staff explore and embrace new ways of delivering services in a cost-effective manner.

Aging infrastructure is a common concern for all municipalities, but in Wainfleet it is particularly challenging. The township maintains more than 500 km of roads and recent engineering reports identify several of our bridges as nearing the end of their useful lives. This means that our bridges would be severely challenged.

One such bridge, the Quarry Rd. Bridge, was replaced in 2008 and it looked as though it would be some time before there would be sufficient funds available for further bridge projects. However, township staff explored innovative construction technology and found a lower-cost replacement solution to our problem. Bulling Bridge was replaced this fall using new fibre-glass technology that was funded, in part, by infrastructure dollars from senior levels of government. This bridge has generated much interest throughout Niagara and will be featured at the 2010 International Conference on Short and Medium Span Bridges.

Following in the same vein, the Township was able to construct our first section of safe bicycle lanes on Feeder Rd. Many residents, young and old, rely on bicycles for transportation or pleasure riding but our gravel road shoulders and busy roadways often jeopardize cyclist safety. Feeder Rd. is designated in the Niagara Region Bikeway Master Plan and during the recent reconstruction of the roadway, the Township was able to add a section of paved bicycle lanes. A \$50,000 grant from the Niagara Region in 2010 will complete these lanes.

Our recreation facilities are a great source of pride for our residents and can easily match those offered by larger municipalities. Council strongly believes in promoting an active lifestyle for all ages, and our recreation complex com-

plete with soccer fields, baseball diamonds, tennis courts, arena, senior's centre, Marsville Heritage Village, and our township library are testaments to that.

In 2010, we will be adding an accessible playground to this list, as the result of a successful funding partnership established with the Ontario Trillium Foundation, that has pledged \$50,000 towards this new project.

Perhaps the best example of the value of our recreation facilities in 2009 was the performance of our minor hockey teams. The return of the Ontario Minor Hockey Association Juvenile championship for the first time since 1987 was an accomplishment that united our community in support of these young players.

The Wainfleet Library plays a very different but an equally important role as part of our recreational team. The library staff members actively promote and encourage the love of reading, and have become leaders among their peers. In 2009, our library demonstrated its leadership when it became one of only two libraries in the Niagara Region offering overdrive audio books to its patrons. With this new technology, patrons can add audio books to their personal listening devices from the convenience of their homes. The library continues to reach out to youngsters through the summer reading program and a new early literacy station.

Of course, made-in-Wainfleet solutions aren't limited to the construction projects we undertake, they also extend to the rules that govern our township. The Official Plan update is well underway and it is anticipated that a draft will be complete in the spring of 2010. This process included public involvement through numerous workshops and public meetings. I thank those that got involved in shaping our long-term planning goals for Wainfleet.

Providing adequate fire and emergency services is another challenge for a municipality of our size, but we are meeting that through the recruitment of new firefighters to complement our existing team. By dedicating a new vehicle, the department was able to use existing reserve funds to convert a used emergency services vehicle. Our "new" rescue truck was a cost-effective solution that will significantly reduce the need for fire trucks to respond to medical calls, ultimately extending the overall operating life of all of the department's vehicles.

As a rural municipality, Wainfleet has never had municipal water and sewer services. However, in response to the boil water advisory in place along the lakeshore area, the township is faced with the challenge of protecting the health and wellbeing of our permanent and seasonal residents, and improving the environment. Working with the region, the Ministry of the Environment and the Medical Officer of Health, the township is meeting the challenge head on. The outcomes of a number of important studies related to the water and sewer servicing project will be shared this year, and will be the basis of the decision of whether or not to move forward.

I strongly believe that Wainfleet and Niagara Region councils will endeavour to do what is best for all. In 2010, I look forward to building on what this council has accomplished so, in our own small way, Wainfleet can continue to be a leader within and beyond the Niagara Region.

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■ **SCHOOL LIFE:** Ecole St. Joseph students present Christmas classic



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BY GEORGE

Bridging the distance



Supplied Photo

After decades of not knowing one another, George Duma has recently connected with his cousin Chris Duma in Poland through the social networking of Facebook. Here, Chris and his daughter Anna spend some vacation time together at the Baltic Sea this past summer. This is just one of the photos Chris and George have been able to exchange with one another.

FROM PAGE 19

They were in Poland and visiting in those days was just not an option. My father had fought for the Allies and come back from Poland. They were both extremely hesitant about getting to a visit, lest they not be allowed to leave.

Meanwhile, it was pretty much impossible for Poles to get travel visas to go abroad. The Soviets, quite correctly, feared they wouldn't come back. So for decades, my parents only had letters to stay in touch with their families. Just recently, that has now changed. I have connected through Facebook with a cousin I knew existed but didn't know much about. Krzysztof Duma is the son of my father's younger brother, Stan, and he is pretty much the same age as I am. He is married and he and Zosia have two children. Anna who is 26 and Wojtek who is 20. Chris and Zosia are both English teachers in Poland so communication comes easily.

Chris has an elder sister, Jola, who is 56 and she and her husband Bogdan have two kids, Dominika, 26, and Patricia, 34. Patricia is married and has two daughters, Kaja, 10 and Iga, one month.

"Thanks to the wonders of the Internet, I am now Facebook 'friends' with not

only Chris, but Anna, Dominika and Kaja. It's thanks to Chris' tenacity that all this came about. When we finally connected, he wrote, "Hi George. So it is you. I am so very happy to find you at last. As I wrote in my last letter I have been trying to find you for some time..."

We have been corresponding now for about three weeks through Facebook and through e-mail, have sent family photos to each other, and we're becoming good friends. He sounds like a great guy and I only wish we lived closer to each other.

I know people who curse the whole idea of modern technology, instead messaging and the dying art of good letter-writing. And while I can certainly empathize with some of those sentiments in our hurry-up world, this is one of those instances when the technology worked. It served a purpose I believe it is actually meant to serve.

I'm grateful, Facebook.

George Duma is a resident of Port Colborne and has spent 30 years in the newspaper business. He is currently a member of the journalism faculty at Niagara College. He welcomes comments and column suggestions and can be reached at gduma@ecogee.ca.